

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
Minutes of February 11, 2013**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Chris Bradley, Selectmen Brad Denny, Charles Morse, John Quinn III, and Gregory Sanders (6:25 p.m.). Also present were Town Manager Rob Lewis, Acting Clerk Ken McCann, Laurie Baroffio (Finance Director), Arlington Supplee (Chair, Board of Listers), Susan Popowski (Board of Listers), Mary Doud (Northfield Falls Neighborhood Crime Watch), and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

Chair Bradley called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

- IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None.

- V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS**

- a. Board of Listers Chair Arlington Supplee.** After soliciting bids and conducting interviews to determine the best appraisal firm to conduct a town-wide reappraisal over the next two years, Mr. Supplee and the other Listers are recommending that the Town of Northfield hire NEMRC (New England Municipal Resource Center). Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve the recommendation of the Board of Listers and hire NEMRC to conduct a town-wide reappraisal for the amount of \$151,000. Chair Bradley then provided a brief overview and timeline of the process to date, including the fact that RFPs were sent out to thirty-three (33) certified appraisal firms (10/25/12); six (6) of these firms attended a mandatory pre-bid meeting (11/13/12); and five (5) of them submitted a bid proposal by the deadline (12/13/12). Over the next two months, the Listers conducted telephone and in-person interviews to determine these firms' ability to conduct the reappraisal in a timely and efficient manner. The Listers then decided to recommend hiring NEMRC. Selectman Morse asked why there were only five (5) bids submitted when thirty-three (33) RFPs had been sent out. Mr. Supplee stated that of the non-bidders who contacted him to explain, most either did not perform town-wide reappraisals or were busy with other work. Selectman Denny then asked about NEMRC's qualifications. Mr. Supplee stated that he had heard very positive things about NEMRC even before conducting the interviews. They have performed this service for several Vermont communities in an effective manner. Kathleen Lott asked if NEMRC was the low bidder on this project. Mr. Supplee stated that their bid was in the middle of the pack; the bid amounts ranged from \$120,794 to \$211,750. However, the bid specifications stated that the "lowest responsible bidder" would be chosen and the Listers determined that NEMRC best fit this criterion. He added that one bidder was eliminated because it did not have the staff on hand to complete the project.  
**Motion passed 4-0-0.**

- b. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio.** Ms. Baroffio had distributed revised 2012-2013 budget projections as well as financial statements covering this fiscal year through January 31, 2013. The budget projection has a positive Town General budget variance of \$6120. This reflects an increase in revenues due to current payment from the State in excess of the amount budgeted. She stated that some departments are projected to have surplus funds at the end of the fiscal year (06/30/13) while others are projected to have a deficit. Ms. Baroffio added that a recent court ruling stated that the Town was wrong when it collected taxes on certain Northfield Electric Department and Water Department properties. The potential tax refunds are (respectively) \$20,750 and \$10,835. Subtracting these amounts from the aforementioned \$6120 budget variance would result in a budget shortfall of \$25,465.

Ms. Baroffio then discussed the Town Highway budget, which now has a positive projected budget variance of \$19,280. She attributed the bulk of this amount to the Town's ability to transfer some of its personnel costs to grant monies received for work on culverts, including the Dole Hill culvert. Other savings were the result of the Town budgeting to contract some of the winter plowing of backroads but then not putting this work out to bid. She added that some line item expenses, such as sand, salt, gravel, etc., may be in deficit but the savings listed above will cover this shortfall.

Chair Bradley stated that since the Board members just received the financial statements, they should contact Manager Lewis if they have any questions. Manager Lewis stated that there will be a Department Head meeting this Thursday morning (02/14/13) and the sole topic will be the current year budgets. Chair Bradley then thanked Ms. Baroffio for her presentation.

#### **VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. **January 28, 2013 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve the minutes. Selectman Morse noted that during the discussion of one-house roads, he had used the expression "action plan" to describe the documentation that the Board should prepare to be pro-active on this matter. However, since Selectman Morse feels that this term might give the wrong impression that the Board is steamrolling this issue, he would like to replace it with "white paper." **Motion to approve revised minutes passed 4-0-0.**

#### **VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. **Warrant #16-13.** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Quinn, to approve Warrant #16-13 in the amount of \$963,977.75. Chair Bradley noted that the bulk of this amount (\$906,000) is property taxes payments collected by the Town and then forwarded to the Northfield School District. Selectman Quinn asked about a copier maintenance payment for the Town Highway and Ambulance Service. Manager Lewis stated that since Highway Superintendent Peter G. DeMasi's printer broke down and the Ambulance Service's copier needed replacement, it was decided to lease a combination printer/copier/fax machine that will be shared by the departments for \$71 per month.

*Selectman Sanders arrived at this time.*

Selectman Quinn noted that the Highway Department recently purchased a new wheel; what happened to the old one? Manager Lewis said that it succumbed to metal fatigue, which happens now and then. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- b. **Approval of Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT) TA-65 Form (Water Street Extension Culvert).** Manager Lewis stated that the Board needed to approve and sign this form so that the Town can be reimbursed for \$41,042.49 for installing this culvert. Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve and sign the AOT TA-65 form. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Bi-Weekly Payroll through February 3, 2013: \$53,830.57.** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Quinn, to approve the bi-weekly payroll in the amount of \$53,830.57. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

#### **VIII. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION**

- a. **Liquor License Renewal Application: South Village Mobil.** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Quinn, to approve and sign the liquor license renewal application. Manager Lewis noted that Police Chief Chris Outten has confirmed that there were no incidents in 2012 that would lead him to advise against the renewal of any local liquor or tobacco license applications. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- b. **Tobacco License Renewal Application: South Village Mobil.** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Quinn, to approve and sign the tobacco license renewal application. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

## IX. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Town/Village Merger Discussion.** As no member of the public wished to discuss this matter, the Board members provided their own opinions on the Town/Village Merger Plan to be voted upon on Town Meeting Day (03/05/13). Selectman Morse stated his hope that the voters approve the merger plan as it is a sensible document. Selectman Denny agreed with this. Chair Bradley felt that the Board members were supportive of the proposed merger plan. Selectman Morse noted that there would be a Public Hearing held before the next regular meeting (02/25/13) when the Merger Plan can be discussed again. He added that the plan also can be discussed during the Open Session on Town Meeting Day. Selectman Denny added that hardcopies of the Merger Plan are being distributed at various locations around Northfield. In addition, the Merger Plan is available now on the municipal website ([www.northfield-vt.gov](http://www.northfield-vt.gov)) and will be printed in this year's Town/School Report.

- b. **Davis Avenue/Dickinson Drive Speed Limit.** Manager Lewis stated that one of the issues brought up at a recent meeting of the Northfield Falls Neighborhood Crime Watch was a request to change the speed limit on the "Davis Avenue and Dickinson Drive loop" to 25 miles per hour (MPH) for its entire length. Currently, a portion of the loop is posted as 30 MPH. Manager Lewis noted that the Town's Traffic Ordinance specifies that part of Davis Avenue has a 25 MPH limit, another part of Davis Avenue is 30 MPH, and the limit on all of Dickinson Drive is 30 MPH. Manager Lewis will investigate this matter further to determine whether or not the ordinance needs to be amended to make this change. If an ordinance revision is necessary, then a number of steps would need to be taken, including a traffic study, a site visit, etc. If the Board wants to pursue this, he also will look into how much this would cost.

Manager Lewis added that the Northfield Falls group has forwarded a number of other requests that also will be addressed in the near future, including increased police presence in the Falls, improved streetlighting, etc. He stated that when the Falls General Store reopens later this spring, there should be a significant increase in foot traffic in the area. Manager Lewis pledged to work with the State to improve crosswalk safety at the intersection of Vermont Route 12 North and Cox Brook Road. He would like to get this done before someone is seriously injured. Mary Doud is a member of the Northfield Falls Neighborhood Crime Watch and she agreed that the increased pedestrian traffic when the store reopens will be a major concern. She also volunteered to help the Town in addressing this problem.

Selectman Morse stated that when he was Municipal Manager he also had problems trying to improve pedestrian safety on the State Highways that go through Northfield. He believes that drivers go too fast around the corner at this particular intersection. He suggested that Manager Lewis might want to go up the AOT chain of command and deal directly with District 6 to get some action on this. He believes that the Northfield Police Department performed a Northfield Falls traffic study circa 2003. Manager Lewis will see if he can find this study. Chair Bradley would like an update on this matter at the Select Board's first regular meeting next month (03/11/13).

- c. **Public Hearing (Australian Ballot Articles).** There will be a Public Hearing held on Monday, February 25, 2013, at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room. This is to allow members of the public to express their views on the eighteen (18) Australian Ballot articles to be voted upon on Town Meeting Day, including one regarding Town/Village Merger. The non-profit organizations seeking funding have been contacted to inform them of this public hearing and to invite them to send representatives if they choose.

**d. Status Reports: Various Projects**

- 1. Northfield Home Energy Challenge.** Selectman Denny reported that the first meeting of a local group in response to the Vermont Home Energy Challenge (sponsored by Efficiency Vermont) was held yesterday afternoon. In this challenge, the state is divided into five (5) regions and there will be a \$10,000 prize awarded to the community in each region that conducts the best home weatherization effort. The group would like to weatherize fifty-two (52) Northfield homes. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 28, 2013, at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room. Selectman Denny is hoping that homeowners seeking assistance will be there along with those willing to volunteer their services. The group's chair is Laura Hill-Eubanks, who also is a member of our Conservation Commission. Selectman Morse asked about the criteria for choosing the winning communities. Selectman Denny is not sure; more information on this challenge will be disseminated at this meeting.

**X. MANAGER'S REPORT**

- a. Status Reports: Various Projects.** Manager Lewis submitted a written report to the Board members regarding current and long-term developments. Selectman Morse complimented Manager Lewis for the report's usefulness. Selectman Denny and Chair Bradley concurred. Manager Lewis then elaborated on a couple items.
  - 1. Fairground Road Bridge Replacement Project.** Selectman Quinn noted that in his report Manager Lewis suggested that the construction phase of this project could be underway by July 1, 2013; he asked if this was a realistic goal. Manager Lewis said that it is realistic if FEMA cooperates; that is the big question mark. He felt that construction would take about five (5) months (under ideal conditions) so he is hopeful that the new bridge will be in place by December 2013.
  - 2. Weekend Road Accident.** Manager Lewis reported that there was an interaction between a Town plow truck and a Village plow truck over the weekend that resulted in minor damage to both vehicles. He believes that both trucks were back in service today (with some scratches). Highway Superintendent DeMasi is following the proper accident protocol with the proper paperwork filled out, photographs taken, etc.

**XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Non-agenda items.** There was none.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Selectman Morse, seconded by Selectman Sanders, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes were approved by the Town Selectmen at their meeting of February 25, 2013.

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.